

SUPERVISOR TRAINING INFORMATION DRUG/ALCOHOL TESTING PROGRAM

Introduction

This guide will provide you with the information you need to improve the productivity of your staff and protect their health and safety by tackling problems that may arise from alcohol and other drug abuse at your worksite.

This guide is designed to make your job easier. It can be scary and tough to think about addressing alcohol and other drug use among the people you work with. But you don't need to be scared, and you don't have to be tough. Addressing alcohol and other drug abuse in the workplace is first and foremost a conduct and performance issue—an employee who uses or abuses alcohol or other drugs on the job may at some point be an employee whose performance goes downhill. You will see it—and this guide tells you how to deal with what you see.

To ensure that you have the best possible advice, the development of this guide involved discussions with supervisors, foremen, stewards, and managers across the country. You will find, as a result, a clear description of your role in a drug-free workplace program and the steps you can take to make sure the program is successful. In short, it is a guide to help you be the best manager or supervisor possible when handling job performance problems.

Your Responsibilities

As a supervisor, you have three main responsibilities within a drug-free workplace program:

1. **Know Your Organization's Policy**

Review your organization's written drug-free workplace policy. If you don't have a copy, ask your employer for one. Become familiar with what the policy permits and prohibits and the penalties for violating the policy.

2. **Be Prepared to Explain the Policy to Employees**

As a supervisor you may be asked to explain the drug-free workplace policy to other employees. Be prepared to answer questions. Most of your employees will welcome a drug-free workplace program, but they will all have questions in the beginning. Below are examples of questions that you may be asked:

What drugs are not allowed?

Is alcohol allowed?

What actions/behaviors are not allowed? (sale, use, etc.)

What happens if someone violates the policy?

Are we going to be drug tested?

How accurate are drug tests?

What happens if I refuse to take a drug test?

What happens if someone tests positive?

Is counseling or treatment available? Will insurance pay?

How is my union involved?

It is best to be ready with answers. If your organization's policy does not address these and other possible questions, ask your employer for the answers. If all questions can be answered, it will help employees to accept and respect the program.

3. **Know Your Role**

You are in a unique position to play a major part in a successful drug-free workplace program. You will need to know how to identify and address employee job performance problems. Always keep in mind that while some problems may be related to alcohol and other drugs, others are not.

As a supervisor, your role is to observe and help improve employee job performance, to document work problems and successes, and to effectively implement your organization's policies and programs.

You are *not* expected to diagnose alcohol or other drug abuse or to provide treatment or counseling services to employees with job performance problems.

Rather, your role is to conduct evaluations of job performance problems. Some organizations will have a formal employee assistance program (EAP). This means that there is a counselor available who is trained to assess the cause of employee job performance problems and offer assistance. If your organization has an EAP, find out how to refer employees with job performance problems to that service. Talk to your employer to make sure you understand what is expected of you -- when it is appropriate to refer an employee to the EAP and the procedures to use. Knowing your role in the organization's drug-free workplace program will help you work well as part of the team.

How to be Part of a Successful Drug-Free Workplace Program

The following action steps can help you identify and handle employee job performance problems.

Be Attentive

The sooner a problem is identified, the sooner it can be corrected, especially when dealing with alcohol and other drug abuse. It is important to remain alert to any and all job performance problems such as:

- rising accident rates
- increased absenteeism or tardiness
- decreased productivity
- deteriorating coworker relationships.

Although these problems can arise for many reasons, including a variety of personal problems, they may also be signs of alcohol or other drug abuse. Don't make assumptions about the reason for a problem: your job is to be aware of problems on the job -- and to make sure that tasks are completed, deadlines are met, and things are running as smoothly as possible. Staying aware of what is happening in your work environment is the first step to doing an excellent job.

Observe

Suppose you see changes in an employee's work patterns or performance, your first step is to watch more closely. For example, you know an employee is making a habit of arriving late, calling in sick a lot, or having mood swings. Has there also been a drop in productivity or an increase in accidents? Remember, it is not your job to figure out the cause of the problem. Your job is to observe employee behavior and determine the effects of those behaviors on job performance.

Changes in behavior may be related to alcohol or other drug abuse; they also may be the result of something else, such as a medical problem like diabetes or high blood pressure. Slurred speech or dizzy spells can be a sign of someone who is high, in need of insulin, or has had a stroke. It is important to call for help if you believe a situation may result in harm to yourself or others. Keep emergency numbers on hand, such as building security and your medical department or EAP.

Document

Job performance problems and other work-related conduct need to be documented. This means a written record should be kept that explains what you see. It should include the names of persons involved, the time, the date, what occurred, names of witnesses, and what actions were taken. Documentation should focus on job performance and should not include your opinions.

Address Job Performance Problems

Once you have documented the job performance problem, you should meet with the employee to discuss what you have seen. Make an appointment at a time and place when you think you will be relaxed and able to discuss the problem without distractions. When job performance problems occur, it is especially important to treat the employee with respect. Your job is to address the performance problem and encourage improvement, not to judge the employee. Be relaxed and maintain a nonjudgmental attitude; this will help keep the lines of communication open, solve the problem, and maintain good management-employee relations.

Many supervisors report that starting a conversation with an employee about a performance problem is often the most difficult step. You may feel unsure about what to say or how to say it. Or you may find yourself wanting to avoid the discussion altogether. The information that follows will help you take the first step.

How to Begin and End a Conversation

Supervisor:

Sarah, I want to talk with you about my observations regarding your work. You have been a good employee in the past, but lately I've noticed changes in your work performance. I want to make you aware of my concerns and hear from you as well, because it is important that you correct the problems as soon as possible.

Employee:

Well, I've just been tired lately . . . I know I've been late a couple of times.

Supervisor:

(Refer to specific documentation of Sarah's job performance in the past month). Actually, you have been late 10 times in the last month, your productivity is down 25 percent, and you have called in sick 3 times in the past 3 weeks, always on a Monday or Friday. Has anything about your job changed that could explain these problems?

Employee:

What do you mean?

Supervisor:

For instance, are you having trouble with a specific job-related task or routine or with a coworker relationship that would cause you to be late or cause your productivity to be down?

Employee:

I don't think so. I mean there are certain people I don't really get along with, but that's not what makes me late. I've been having problems at home. I guess it has been affecting work more than I thought. I get the message. I'll try to do better.

Supervisor:

Sarah, it is important that your work performance improve. I will give you 2 weeks to correct the behaviors I mentioned before taking further disciplinary action. In the meantime I will remind you that the employee assistance program is available to you if you need help with personal problems that are affecting your job performance. When we meet again 2 weeks from Thursday, we will review your job performance again. Between now and our next meeting I expect you to be present at work and on time every day. If your attendance and tardiness do not improve, we will discuss further disciplinary actions.

Note for Supervisor: (Further disciplinary action may include referring the employee to the EAP again, or to some other source of help in the community. Again, **it is important that you follow the guidelines established by your employer** as to how you should handle referrals.) It also is essential that you prepare a written summary of this meeting that includes the follow-up plan you made with the employee, then conduct the follow-up as scheduled.

What to do if the Conversation Goes Off Track

Employees often become defensive when their supervisor draws attention to a job performance problem. The employee may cry, show anger, or make excuses to take the focus off the real issue -- job performance.

When an employee becomes defensive, it is especially helpful to stay focused on job performance and conduct. While it is important to be understanding, it is not your job to counsel the employee about his or her personal problems. The goal of your meeting is to discuss and find solutions to the job performance problem.

Barriers and How to Handle Them

Confronting an employee about a job performance or conduct problem is not easy. No one can tell you how an employee will respond. Sometimes an employee may become upset with you, hoping this will make you back down from the confrontation. Being aware of potential barriers is the best way to decrease the chance of a negative reaction. The information below provides guidance for how to respond to some of the most common barriers.

Barriers That Arise When Addressing Employee Problems

Denial

The employee denies that problems exist and insists that the supervisor or someone else in the company is out to get him or her.

How To Respond:

Stay calm. Have at hand documentation of the employee's job performance and/or conduct and keep the conversation focused on performance issues.

Threats

The employee threatens you or the organization.

"If you push me, I'll go to an attorney . . . make a scene in the plant . . . quit here and now . . ."

How To Respond:

Remind the employee that he or she may do whatever he or she chooses; however, as a supervisor your responsibility is to uphold the organization's policy and find a solution that will help both the organization and the employee. If you think you are losing your objectivity or need help to resolve a conflict with a defensive employee, seek the help of another supervisor or manager.

Rationalization

The employee tries to avoid the issue by making excuses.

"If this job wasn't so stressful, I wouldn't be making so many mistakes and wouldn't be late so often."

How To Respond:

Stay focused on work performance. Avoid being distracted by excuses; let the employee know that help is available.

Angry Outburst

The employee becomes angry. He or she may cry, yell, or scream. This emotional outburst is intended to scare off the supervisor and cause him or her to drop the whole affair.

(In a shouting voice with arms raised) "How dare you accuse me of being late to work and not getting my deliveries made on time!"

How To Respond:

Do not react! Wait until the employee has run out of steam and then continue where you left off; keep the focus on performance issues. If the employee continues to carry on, reschedule the meeting.

Be Consistent

Regardless of your personal relationship with an employee, it is important to treat each person the same when addressing job performance and/or conduct problems. This is not always easy to do. By following your organization's procedures, you avoid playing favorites. This protects you from being accused of discrimination and can help your relationship with the people you supervise.

Maintain Confidentiality

All discussions of an employee's job problems should be held in private. No one else should be able to hear the conversation. If employees choose to tell coworkers about their private concerns (e.g., results of a drug test), that is their decision. However, when an employee tells you something in confidence, you are obligated to keep it between the two of you.

Be "up front" with the employee at the beginning of the meeting. If your employer requires that you report what will be said, it is important that you inform the employee before you begin the meeting. Although not a common problem, you could be sued if you disclose what is said in the meeting without the permission of the employee. Respecting employee confidentiality is critical to developing a trusting relationship with the people you supervise.

Follow-up

Taking follow-up action is a key part of your role in your organization's drug-free workplace program. Follow-up means that you continue to observe and document the employee's job performance and conduct. Follow-up ensures that the employee keeps to the agreement and that improvements are made. Before your follow-up meeting(s) with the employee, review the employee's progress and decide what steps to take from there.

If the employee's job performance and/or conduct has improved, no further disciplinary action needs to be taken. However, you should continue to monitor his or her progress until you are sure the performance problem is resolved completely.

If job performance or conduct has not improved as agreed, or if the employee refuses to acknowledge or correct his or her behavior, document these events and tell the employee the actions that you will take next. Inform the employee that help is available.

You may not know if an employee is in treatment for an alcohol or other drug problem. However, if an employee tells you that he or she is seeking help, support the recovery process but do not "enable."

Note: Being in treatment is not an excuse for poor job performance. Your responsibility is to make sure employees do a good job. Protect yourself and the employee's rights by consistently following your organization's disciplinary procedures if an employee's job performance or conduct does not improve.

Other Issues

Reintegrating an Employee After Treatment

Returning to work after or during treatment for alcohol and other drug abuse can be stressful. You can help lessen this stress by assuring the employee that you will maintain confidentiality and by carrying on with business as usual.

Employees who return from inpatient treatment or who are enrolled in any type of outpatient treatment program need to know that they will be held accountable for their job performance and conduct. Clear guidelines should be established regarding how the employee's progress will be monitored. For instance, the employee needs to be informed about periodic follow-up reviews, drug testing (if applicable), and in general, how your organization will handle his or her return to work (if the employee was away at an inpatient program).

You may or may not know if an employee is attending an outpatient treatment program. Most employees are able to maintain a regular work schedule while receiving treatment during nonwork hours. However, sometimes employees will need time off from work to pull themselves together physically, even if they are not hospitalized. If an employee attends an inpatient treatment program, an intensive day treatment program, or any other type of counseling that will interfere with his or her regular work hours, you may need to know more about the situation, such as when and for how long the employee will be away from work.

In 1992 the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) became law. There are certain provisions ["reasonable accommodations"] with which employers must comply when an employee is in treatment for alcohol or other drug

addiction. The ADA defines “reasonable accommodation” to mean, at least, a flexible work schedule so employees can attend treatment-related meetings (e.g., aftercare, support groups, counseling sessions). For more information about the ADA, call 1-800-669-EEOC.

It is important that you understand what the employee needs as well as what your employer expects of you in this situation. You will want to be able to support the employee as he or she resolves any performance problems, but you must also ensure that your employer’s expectations are met and that you follow your organization’s policy.

Back-to-Work Conferences

If the supervisor has been informed about an employee’s inpatient or intensive day treatment process, a back-to-work conference is often scheduled at the time an employee is discharged from treatment. This meeting usually includes the employee, his or her counselor, and the supervisor or another company representative. Sometimes a union representative will want to be included in the meeting, if applicable.

The purpose of a back-to-work conference is to ensure that the employee knows the employer’s expectations once the employee returns to work. These expectations are often explained in a written contract that the employee signs. The recommendations of the treatment center staff are usually incorporated into the contract to ensure that the employee continues to stay free of alcohol or other drugs.

Union Agreements

If you are subject to a collectively bargained agreement, you will need to comply with that agreement. If you are unsure of the terms as they relate to your drug-free workplace program and/or your role, ask your employer or business agent to explain this to you, or obtain a copy of the agreement.

Your Beliefs About Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse

Despite the fact that the American Medical Association defined alcoholism as a treatable disease in the early 1950s, many people still believe that people with alcohol and other drug problems drink out of brown paper bags, live on the streets, and/or cannot hold a job. These beliefs are myths. Most alcohol and other drug abusers have nice homes, steady jobs, and do not drink out of brown bags.

As a manager, it is important to be aware of your own beliefs about alcoholism and other drug problems so that they do not interfere with your job. As with any other managerial responsibility, personal beliefs and prejudices will need to be put aside.

Employees Who Report to Work Unfit For Duty

If you are not sure how to manage an employee who reports to work unfit for duty, ask your supervisor for advice and follow your organization's policy. In general, it is advisable that you have two management staff members verify that the employee is not fit to do his or her job. Document the conduct problems as objectively as possible. If there is a human resources or safety person in your organization, he or she should be notified and consulted about the situation. If all of the management personnel involved decide that the employee is not fit to do his or her job, the employee should be sent home via public transportation or with a family member, or be escorted home by another staff member. Do not let the employee drive home if he or she is not fit to perform the job. The manager should then decide, based on the organization's policy, the disciplinary actions that should be taken.

Alcohol or Other Drug Abuse of a Boss or Supervisor

Alcohol and other drug abuse and addiction are serious illnesses that affect people in all walks of life, in all types of jobs, and of all ages. The issue is especially touchy when it is your boss who is having a problem with alcohol or other drug abuse. Handling alcohol or other drug abuse of an employer or another supervisor requires careful thought, and your response will depend on your relationship with him or her.

It is not advisable to confront the situation on your own. Seek the help of another manager or a professional who can advise you about your options, or ask for help from your company EAP. Some addictions professionals are trained to help family members and friends learn about intervention—a structured form of offering assistance. An addiction treatment center in your community probably has a staff member who is trained to do intervention.

What to do if You Find Illegal Drugs at Work

Use caution. Review your organization's policy to see if guidelines have been established for how to handle these situations. Do not discard or transport the drugs yourself. Seek the help and guidance of another supervisor or manager. Contact your local police department.

Supervisor Training

<p>Supervisors can play a central role in an effective drug-free workplace program. More than anyone else in the organization, they are in a position to recognize changes in an employee's job performance. The role of supervisors is very important.</p> <p>In smaller companies, the employer and the supervisor may be the same person. Whatever the size of your organization, review this Supervisor's Guide, as it will help you to</p> <p>Conceptualize your program and ensure that you and your staff focus on job performance as opposed to personal issues.</p>	<p>Training supervisors to assist in implementing a drug-free workplace program can be an effective management tool. It can help them to be better supervisors, and it can help employees be more accountable for their job performance.</p>	
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The Supervisor's Role

Supervisors have a variety of responsibilities within a drug-free workplace program. Supervisors should:

- Know the organization's program and policy, including the rationale for the program and specific details about drug testing procedures, if applicable, as well as other components
- Be able to explain the program to employees
- Know where to refer employees for help and information
- Understand and accept the importance of supervision as a tool for implementing the policy -- recognizing that the supervisor is the best judge of employee performance.

Supervisors are not expected to provide substance abuse counseling. Neither should they try to diagnose alcohol or other drug problems. If a supervisor suspects an alcohol, drug-related, or other problem, particularly as evidenced by poor job performance or conduct, the employee should be referred for professional evaluation and assistance.

The Supervisor: Enforcer or Advocate?

Because an important responsibility of supervisors is to observe and evaluate employee job performance, they can be effective advocates for employees. They can encourage employees to deal with work-related problems that may or may not be connected with alcohol or other drug use. They also can suggest sources of help and support, such as an employee assistance program (EAP) or local treatment program, when an employee has problems.

If an employee has been given a chance to improve job performance but hasn't changed his or her behavior, the supervisor may need to take a more forceful approach. Still, the emphasis should be on improving the employee's job performance, not on judging the employee.

What Supervisors Need To Know

All supervisors should be provided with basic information about the program and their role in carrying it out. This includes:

- The rationale and specific details of the program startup and implementation
- The supervisor's specific responsibilities for initiating and carrying out the drug-free workplace policy and program
- How to recognize and deal with employees who have job performance problems that may or may not be related to alcohol or other drugs, including personal and family problems.

Guidelines For Effective Supervision	
	Be attentive. Be ready to recognize employee problems (e.g., accidents, frequent lateness, mood swings) that may or may not be related to alcohol or other drug abuse.
	Observe. Focus on specific aspects of job performance.
	Document. Keep an ongoing record of the employee's performance.
	Focus on job performance. Avoid judging, diagnosing, or counseling the employee.
	Be thoughtful. Stay nonjudgmental and recognize the employee's point of view.
	Be straightforward. Stick to the facts of job performance; don't get sidetracked.

	Be consistent. Follow the same procedures for all employees.
	Maintain confidentiality. Discuss employee problems in private and keep the discussion between the two of you.
	Refer. Encourage troubled employees to seek help from the resources available in the workplace or the community.
	Follow up. Continue to assess employee job performance over a period of time.

Substance Abuse: Symptoms and Intervention

If substance abuse could be contributing to an employee's deteriorating performance, ignoring the situation won't help. It may be the employee who has an alcohol or drug problem or it may be a family member. No matter who has a problem, it will likely only get worse and have costly—and possibly disastrous—consequences for everyone unless some action is taken.

Recognizing the Symptoms

Clinical diagnosis of an alcohol or other drug problem is **not** the job of the supervisor, but work performance is. A key part of every supervisor's job is to remain alert to changes in employee performance and to work with employees who are having problems so that performance improves.

The following list of performance and behavior problems are common to many substance-abusing employees. However, it is important to remember that these symptoms **do not** necessarily indicate that the employee has a substance abuse problem.

Performance

- inconsistent work quality
- poor concentration
- lowered productivity
- increased absenteeism
- unexplained disappearances from the job-site
- carelessness, mistakes
- errors in judgment
- needless risk-taking
- disregard for safety
- extended lunch periods and early departures

Behavior

- frequent financial problems
- avoidance of friends and colleagues
- blaming others for own problems and shortcomings
- complaints about problems at home
- deterioration in personal appearance
- complaints and excuses of vaguely- defined illnesses

When and How to Intervene

When an employee's performance begins to deteriorate for whatever reason, the supervisor has the right and responsibility to intervene. The supervisor does not need to be an expert on alcohol and other drugs to intervene appropriately if substance abuse is suspected; the intervention should be focused on the performance problem.

Principles of Intervention

Maintain control of the conversation

- stick to the facts as they affect work performance
- don't rely on memory; have all supporting documents and records available
- do not discuss alcohol or drug use

Be clear and firm

- explain company policy concerning performance
- explain company substance abuse policy
- explain consequences if performance expectations are not met

Be supportive but avoid emotional involvement

- offer help in resolving performance problems
- identify resources for help in addressing personal problems

This concludes the supervisor training material



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